C. L. Cofey

MAY 1956

# MONTHLY REVIEW

N INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST MAGAZINE

VOL. 8

1

## CAPITALISM AND AGRICULTURE

THE EDITORS

## PROBLEMS OF AMERICAN SOCIALISM

A DISCUSSION

## *Where We Stand*

THE EDITORS

ITORS . . . LEO HUBERMAN . . . PAUL M. SWEEZY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CONTENTS VOLUME EIGHT NUMBER ONE MAY 1956

REVIEW OF THE MONTH: Capitalism and Agriculture ..... 1
PROBLEMS OF AMERICAN SOCIALISM: A Discussion ..... 13
WHERE WE STAND by The Editors ..... 24
WORLD EVENTS by Scott Nearing ..... 26

MONTHLY REVIEW: Published monthly and copyright, 1956, by Monthly Review, Inc.
EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICE: 218 West 10th Street, New York 14, New York. Telephone: ORegon 5-6939.
MAILING ADDRESS: 66 Barrow Street, New York 14, New York. Address ALL communications to 66 Barrow Street.
SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: One year—$3.00 (foreign, $3.50); two years—$5.00 (foreign, $6.00).
By 1st class mail — United States $5; everywhere else $6.
By air mail — No. America $7; So. America $13; Europe $17; Asia $24.
EDITORS: Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy.

## NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

The other day a man came into the office with 35c in his hand and asked for the April issue. He was so disappointed when he found nothing on recent and current happenings in the USSR that he walked out without buying it. Since other readers of MR may feel somewhat the same way, we are including here a few words of explanation. The Review of the Month is in a sense misnamed. We plan it as far in advance as possible, and we try in every case to tackle problems afresh and as a whole. That means background reading, checking the latest literature, accumulating a great deal more material than we can hope to compress into a few pages. All this takes time. Drafts then have to be exchanged between the editors by mail, and we often submit them to one or more persons in whose judgment and knowledge of the particular subject we have special confidence. Normally, this procedure results in our working on several subjects at the same time and looking at least two or three months ahead. When one of us is about to go on a speaking trip, the need for planning ahead is increased. This was the situation which confronted us last winter when we began to arrange Paul Sweezy's present tour. We decided to devote the April, May, and June Reviews of the Month to two crucial American problems—race relations and agriculture—and we got to work on them. Then came the bombshells from Moscow. Should we drop everything and try to get something out as soon as possible? Or should we stick to our plans and delay our comments on events which must surely have a fateful influence on the whole future of the international socialist movement? It was naturally not an easy choice,

(*continued on inside back cover*)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# CAPITALISM AND AGRICULTURE

The political experts seem to be unanimously agreed that the farm vote is one of the great unknowns in the political equation of 1956. Hence the spate of talk about "the farm problem" which has recently filled the press, the airwaves, and the halls of Congress. Hence, also, the frenetic competition among the politicos to come forward with new proposals to rescue "the farmer" from a fate akin to, if not worse than, bankruptcy. But in more sophisticated circles, it is no longer fashionable to indulge in such naive oversimplifications or to assume that government agricultural programs reach the segments of our rural population which are really in distress today. There has recently emerged a considerable body of literature on agriculture which is addressed not so much to the specialist as to what may be called the thinking element in the ruling class.* A survey of this literature indicates that the following points are pretty well understood and agreed upon:

(1) American agriculture has been going through a technological revolution since the beginning of World War II. Capital and output, both per man and per acre, have risen steeply. Except during wartime, however, the increase in demand has lagged behind. As a consequence, mountainous surpluses have piled up in government warehouses.

(2) The surplus problem has been aggravated by price supports, and all attempts to solve it by such devices as restricting the acreage planted to surplus crops have (a) been defeated by rising productivity, and (b) tended to create further surplus problems in uncontrolled commodities to which additional acreage has been diverted.

(3) American agriculture is sharply stratified. Here, reduced to

* As examples, we may cite the following: (1) the now-famous piece in *Harper's* (December 1955), entitled "The Country Slickers Take Us Again," which evoked an ill-starred and hastily retracted note of approval from one of Secretary of Agriculture Benson's secretaries; (2) the special report in *Business Week* (December 10, 1955), entitled "What's Behind the New Farm Crisis"; the Department of Agriculture's study, *Development of Agriculture's Human Resources,* April 1955; the National Planning Association's *A New Look at Farm Policy: Statement by NPA Agriculture Committee on National Policy,* released November 14, 1955; and the Committee for Economic Development's *Economic Policy for American Agriculture,* January 1956.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a table, is the way *Business Week* presents the matter:

| | *Approximate number* | *Approximate percent of farm output* |
|---|---|---|
| "Big commercial operators" | 100,000 | 25 |
| "Large family-operated commercial farms" | 2,000,000 | 60 |
| "Small family farms" | 1,000,000 | 8 |
| "Farms that are really rural residences" | 1,700,000 | 7 |

Between the top and bottom there is a veritable abyss symbolized in Business Week's sub-head: "Cadillacs vs. Rural Slums." And in view of existing and potential surpluses, it is obvious that the last two categories in this table—the more than half of all farms that produce only 15 percent of total output—are completely dispensable as far as their productive contribution is concerned. In the capitalist scheme of things, these farmers have the same relation to agriculture that unemployables have to industry: they are a welfare problem, not an economic problem. To quote *Business Week* again (p. 118): "There is now general recognition that low-income farmers comprise a social welfare problem apart from the problems of commercial farmers."

(4) Government policy has benefited the Big Boys, not the little fellow. This has been most engagingly admitted by President Eisenhower himself. Addressing the Congress on January 9th, he said: "In my message of January 11, 1954, I pointed out that the chief beneficiaries of our farm programs have been the 2 million larger, more productive farm units. Production on nearly 3 million other farms is so limited that the families thereon benefit only in small degree from the types of programs that heretofore have dominated our activities." (According to the same source, what has been done for the low-income farmer in the last two years amounts to something less than an all-out assault on a critical problem: pilot work is under way in "well over 30 counties" (out of a total of 3,067 in the United States!), and there is "activity" [what kind?] in "more than one half of the states.")

(5) Finally, commercial agriculture—that part that produces the bulk of our crops and rolls up the surpluses—has on the whole been doing very well in recent years. In this connection, we can do no better than quote a passage from a piece on "The Farm Problem" from the December, 1955, Monthly Letter of the First National City Bank of New York:

> Looked at from a balance sheet standpoint, this "business" in the aggregate makes an impressive showing. According to official figures, U.S. farmers on January 1, '55 held real estate



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

valued at $91 billion, equipment, crops, livestock, etc., $50 billion, and cash and investments of $22 billion—a grand total of $163 billion. Against this, farm indebtedness stood at the relatively low total of $18 billion, leaving a net equity of $145 billion—up $1.3 billion for the year. Indebtedness amounted to only 11 percent of total assets, against 19 percent in 1940 and 21 percent in 1930. Farmers as a whole held at the beginning of this year enough liquid assets to more than retire their debts.

While some young farmers, particularly those who started farming with only a small equity and at the peak of prices, are in debt trouble, this condition obviously is not representative of commercial farmers generally. About seven out of ten farms have no mortgage debt.

In more graphic terms, the piece in *Harper's* for December, 1955 ("The Country Slickers Take Us Again") puts it this way:

> Just how rugged is the farmer's plight today?
>
> You should have such a plight.
>
> When Harrison Salisbury of *The New York Times* traveled through the Middle West last summer, he reported that "The ordinary Iowa farmer . . . has a minimum of two new cars and they are usually brand new Buicks or Oldsmobiles or Cadillacs." These Iowa swine-growers and steer-fatteners are of course better off than many of their bretheren in other states. Still, the average farm family, taken the country over, has assets totaling about $22,000.
>
> It is true that the slice of the national income which goes to agriculture has shrunk in the last four years—that is what the moaning is all about—but the farm population has dwindled too. As a result, the individual farmer isn't much worse off—only about 5 percent—than he was at the peak of his scandalous wartime prosperity.

This, in brief summary, is the sophisticated ruling-class picture of American agriculture today, the general background against which the administration and Congress, starting from President Eisenhower's special message of January 9th, are now seeking to develop a new and more satisfactory agricultural program. Before venturing comment on these efforts, we should note carefully the two respects in which the picture is most seriously deficient.

First, it omits the problem of the agricultural wage earner, the real forgotten man of present-day American life. Here we will only repeat on this subject what a Special Correspondent wrote in these pages several months ago ("Mergers on the Farm, Too," MR, October 1955, pp. 195-196):

> . . . it must be emphasized that we do have a depressed and



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

under-privileged rural proletariat—it is the wage earners, largely casual, who are employed principally on our largest and technologically most advanced farms. The plight of these workers, many of them migratory, was the subject of fictional treatment by John Steinbeck, and more serious books by Carey McWilliams, Paul Taylor, and others before the war, and was the specific object of inquiry by the LaFollette and Tolan Committees. Senator LaFollette introduced a carefully prepared series of bills in the early 1940s, designed to bring these workers under the protection of the Wagner Act, the Wage-Hour Act, Social Security, and other protective programs enacted under the New Deal. These bills were never seriously considered by the Congress. The evils they were intended to correct persist to this day, though probably few realize that they arise in connection with employment on a very small proportion of the nation's farms.

Is it necessary to add that neither the present administration nor the present Congress has the slightest interest in this whole subject? After all, most migratory workers can't even vote.

Second, the approach to agricultural problems presented in the literature to which we have been referring is essentially static. This is not to say that it denies the reality of change: on the contrary, as pointed out above, it starts from the proposition that American agriculture has been going through what amounts to a revolution. Despite this awareness, however, it makes no effort to uncover and analyze the dynamic *processes* of change, the inner mechanism which is *continuing* to revolutionize American agriculture and will undoubtedly produce a very different overall picture ten or even five years from now. Without an understanding of this mechanism, we cannot estimate the possible effects, and hence the merits (if any), of a given agricultural program. Let us attempt to remedy this most serious weakness in the ruling class's comprehension of the agricultural scene. The task is made both easier and more urgent by the recent release of preliminary results of the 1954 Census of Agriculture, from which the following statistics are taken.

The key fact revealed by this latest Census of Agriculture is that the process of concentration and centralization has speeded up in the last five years to an unprecedented degree. "One of the most significant changes revealed by the 1954 farm census," says the Census Bureau,* was the decline of almost 600,000, or 11.1 percent, in the number of farms. The number of farms decreased from 1950 to 1954 in every state except Florida, and in all except 180 out of the 3,067 counties in the United States. The number of census farms was less

* U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1954 Census of Agriculture—Preliminary: Farms, Farm Characteristics, Farm Products,* Washington, December 1955.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in 1954 than for any census since 1890." It could have been added that the drop in number of farms was the greatest in any five-year period of our history. Considering that there was almost no change in total farm acreage, this means that the average size of farms increased as the number of farms declined. But a given change in the average can be brought about in many different ways, and it is here that the new figures are most striking and revealing. The following table is compiled from the preliminary census results:

| *Size of farm* | *Number of farms in each size category (in thousands)* 1950 | 1954 | *% change* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Under 3 acres | 77 | 100 | +43 |
| 3 to 9 acres | 408 | 384 | — 6 |
| 10 to 29 acres | 854 | 713 | —17 |
| 30 to 49 acres | 624 | 500 | —20 |
| 50 to 69 acres | 427 | 346 | —19 |
| 70 to 99 acres | 621 | 518 | —17 |
| 100 to 139 acres | 579 | 492 | —15 |
| 140 to 179 acres | 523 | 461 | —12 |
| 180 to 219 acres | 275 | 257 | — 7 |
| 220 to 259 acres | 212 | 207 | — 2 |
| 260 to 499 acres | 478 | 482 | + 1 |
| 500 to 999 acres | 182 | 192 | + 6 |
| 1,000 and more | 121 | 130 | + 8 |
| TOTAL* | 5,382 | 4,782 | —11 |

Notice first that there was a sharp *increase* in the number of smallest farms, those under 3 acres, which are for the most part rural or semi-rural residences. When we get to the next category, 3 to 9 acres, the force of the centralization process begins to outweigh the tendency to establish new small "farms"; and in every category from 3 to 259 there is a decline in numbers, sharpest in the lower reaches and tapering off toward the upper limit. It is in the 10-259 acre range that most smaller-sized commercial farms are located, and it was here that the great decline took place. The total number of farms of 10 to 259 acres dropped from 4.1 million to 3.5 million, or 15 percent.

When we get to the larger farms, however, the movement is reversed. The increase starts at 260 acres and reaches its maximum of 8 percent in the 1,000-and-more category.

The figures are even more striking if we confine attention to

* Detail does not necessarily add up to total because of rounding.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

commercial farms and arrange them not by acreage but by value of product:

| *Value of product (in dollars)* | *Number of commercial farms in each size category (in thousands)* 1950 | 1954 | *% change* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 250 - 1,199 | 708 | 462 | —35 |
| 1,200 - 2,499 | 896 | 763 | —15 |
| 2,500 - 4,999 | 882 | 811 | — 8 |
| 5,000 - 9,999 | 725 | 706 | — 3 |
| 10,000 - 24,999 | 386 | 449 | +16 |
| 25,000 and more | 106 | 134 | +26 |
| TOTAL | 3,704 | 3,327 | —10 |

Here there are no extraneous factors—such as the establishment of new rural residences—to distort the figures, and the twin trends toward the elimination of small farms and the expansion in the number of large stand out with the greatest possible clarity.

What needs special stressing, it seems to us, is the magnitude and power of the process which these statistics reflect. A decline of *more than a third* in the number of the smallest commercial farms concomitantly with an increase of *more than a quarter* in the number of the largest, and all within the short space of five years! It is doubtful if in the whole history of capitalism there has ever been anything like it for speed and intensity. How Karl Marx, the father of the theory of the concentration and centralization of capital, would have relished these statistics! And what an eloquent commentary they provide on the learned "scientists" who never tire of proclaiming that Marxism is bankrupt, that agriculture is "different," and so on and so forth *ad nauseam*. Facts, as Lenin was fond of saying, are stubborn things.

What is behind this great rush to concentration and centralization in American agriculture? It won't do to repeat pat phrases about science and technology. Science does not apply itself, and technology does not introduce itself. These are functions of individuals, groups, and institutions; and in capitalist society they are functions that can be performed only by those who have the necessary capital at their disposal. It follows that here—as generally in the analysis of capitalist society—we need to study first of all the process of capital accumulation. Who has been doing the accumulating? From what sources of capital? It is in this area that we shall discover the motor force of the changes we have been considering, and it is here that we may expect to find the key to what is likely to happen in the period ahead.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

First, it is clear on the face of the statistics that accumulation has been taking place by the larger farm operators, generally in proportion to their size, and to a large extent at the expense of the smaller farms.

Second, as to sources of capital, the data on farm mortgages cited above from the First National City Bank Letter prove that borrowing has not been a major factor. And since there are virtually no agricultural corporations large enough to raise money by the sale of stocks and bonds, the only possible conclusion is that the capital came from the profits of the larger operators who did most of the expanding.

This will undoubtedly come as a surprise to many who have been unduly impressed by the arguments of the spokesmen of the big farm organizations to the effect that farm incomes in general have been depressed by the falling of prices below parity and the declining share of the consumer dollar accruing to the primary producer. But the facts permit of no other conclusion. The harsh truth is that the loudest shouting from the farm interests in recent times has been little more than a smokescreen thrown up by a special interest to conceal its extremely favorable position.

To sum up, then, what has been going on and is reflected in the latest census figures is that the richer farmers have been able to pay off their debts and rapidly expand their capital in the form of real estate, machinery, fertilizer, livestock, and so on. This process of expansion has involved not only what Marx called *concentration* of capital (the adding of newly created capital to existing units) but also *centralization* of capital (the gobbling up of smaller units by larger ones). Note that the high profits of large-scale capital-intensive farming have provided both the means and the incentives to ever more concentration and centralization. In other words, as long as profits remain high and are correlated with size, they provide the fuse and the fuel for a chain-reaction process—the very process which is transforming American agriculture before our eyes.

It is against this background that we must appraise the various proposals and policies which are now being discussed and debated in and out of Congress.

President Eisenhower's special message of January 9th ostensibly put forth a nine-point program, but in reality there is only one proposal that needs to be taken seriously in the present context (the rest are of a minor or window-dressing character), and that is the so-called soil bank plan. The scheme, which is, of course, not new, is based on implicit acceptance of the parity idea—that farm prices should be kept in a certain relation to other prices through government action—but it proposes that the chief instrument for achieving



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this should be restriction of production rather than direct price supports. Stripped of fancy terminology, therefore, the soil bank is simply a scheme for paying farmers to hold land out of production and to devote it to resource-conserving crops or uses.

In principle, this idea makes a lot more sense than the kind of price-support-plus-acreage-allotment schemes that have been in operation in recent years and have tended to generalize rather than solve the surplus problem. There is no doubt that the way to cut output is to take land out of production altogether and not to limit the amount devoted to particular crops. Nor is there any doubt that farmers are at least as willing to be paid for not producing as they are for producing: the only proviso is that they must be paid enough to make the former alternative more attractive. Finally, as every freshman economics student (or industrial monopolist) knows, the right way to control prices is to limit supply.

The soil bank, then, seems to have everything. If applied on a large enough scale and furnished with enough cash to back it up, the plan would result in a reduction of agricultural production, a stiffening of prices, and a gradual decline of surpluses. How much land would have to be withdrawn and what it would cost are questions for the experts which we couldn't answer if we wanted to, nor can we now estimate the political likelihood of the plan's being adopted on the required scale. But the principle is clear; those who doubt or deny it are flying in the face of the law of supply and demand than which (properly understood) there is no more eternal verity.

But let's be clear about one thing. The soil bank would not halt the concentration and centralization process. It would not stabilize the agricultural situation nor save the small farmer. On the contrary, it would intensify the trends of recent years, and it would do so in more or less direct proportion to its effectiveness.

The reasons for this are not far to seek. Direct payments under the plan would of course go mostly to the big farmers but this, while by no means unimportant, is not the main point. By keeping prices up, the plan would inflate the profits of the larger operators; and by reducing the supply of cultivable land, it would increase the pressure to expand operations by buying up existing farms. Land values would be forced up, and it would become increasingly difficult for the smaller farmer to keep up with the need for expansion required to make optimum use of his capital. How can it be doubted that more and more of them, faced with gloomy prospects and high land values, would sell out and move to town or city?

The soil bank plan, in other words, is a more rational and effective way of doing just what government policy has been doing anyway,



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that is to say, helping the bigger and richer farmers to take over American agriculture.

Is this a good thing or a bad thing?

It all depends, it seems to us, on (a) the point of view from which you judge it, and (b) the alternative policies which you are prepared to advocate.

The Big Boys themselves, both in agriculture and in the rest of the economy, should find the soil bank much to their taste. The one big drawback, of course, is the cost in taxes, but this would be offset in part by a reduction in the present high costs of direct price supports, and in any case must be looked upon as one of the unavoidable overhead expenses of maintaining the capitalist system. Moreover, the best hope of reducing the cost in the future lies in the direction of introducing a larger and larger element of private monopoly into the agricultural sector of the economy. It will be surprising if the soil bank plan fails to generate a large measure of enthusiasm and political backing from the powers-that-be.

So far as the really small, non-commercial, part-time or subsistence farmer is concerned, the whole issue is largely academic. The surplus problem is not his problem, and he stands to gain little or nothing from the various methods proposed for dealing with it. He needs a program tailored to his own interests, and (let us be perfectly clear about it) his chances of getting such a program under capitalism are very small indeed. Practically speaking, his alternatives under capitalism are to continue to endure his lot or to move off the land. It is no wonder that younger people are taking the latter course in increasing numbers, and we feel strongly that a short-run left program should concentrate on measures designed to help them to move and find decent jobs and homes elsewhere. This applies especially to Negroes in the rural South and racial minorities elsewhere in the country.

What about the smaller, and generally less efficient, commercial farmer? He is the one who has been particularly squeezed by falling prices in recent years and who has been most vocal in expressing his dissatisfaction and anger. He still retains, despite his reduced numbers, a measure of political power in the predominantly agricultural states. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that what is commonly called the farm crisis refers primarily to his plight. And by and large, it is he who pushes most vigorously and insistently the demand for full price parity as the heart of government policy.

The attitude of this group toward the soil bank tends to be ambiguous. On the one hand, the small commercial farmer approves of anything that promises to raise prices; on the other hand, he disap-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

proves of anything that restricts his production and makes it more costly for him to expand his operations in accordance with the imperatives of the new technology. The soil bank works in both directions and therefore fails to arouse his enthusiasm.

What, then, is his program?

One can only give an answer to this question if one abandons at the outset any idea that the small, hard-pressed commercial farmer has a clear and logically consistent program for his, or any one else's, ills. He knows what he wants—higher prices and fewer controls. And he thinks it's up to the government to see that he gets what he wants. Beyond that, he doesn't care to look too closely; and the rationalizations which are manufactured for him by his (often self-appointed) spokesmen are all too likely to be specious or, at best, utopian. The knights of the Fair Deal, who always fancy themselves as the farmer's champion, declaim against the iniquities of "scarcity economics." The cure for the farm problem—which means higher prices and fewer controls for the small commercial farmer—is proclaimed to be expanded consumption. We need a dynamic approach, an expanding economy, full employment, better diets, and so on. But all under capitalism of course: perish the thought that there should be any interference with the sacred right to make a profit! And when we get behind the bluster and talk, we usually find a bigger military budget, the sovereign remedy of that curious animal, the "liberal Democrat."

But this is not the place for an analysis of all the programs and nostrums and panaceas that have been put forward in the name of saving the small family farm. Nor do we need to pass judgment on the merits of this goal, either from the point of view of the farmers themselves or of society as a whole. What we do have to insist upon is that no policy that has the slightest chance of being adopted—whether it be the soil bank, or rigid price supports regardless of surplus considerations, or outright subsidies ("production payments")—will accomplish what its sponsors promise. Each and every one will further strengthen the big farmers at the expense of the little ones and thus accelerate the process of concentration and centralization. The truth is that this process is so deeply rooted in the nature of capitalist society and has already gone so far and acquired so much momentum that it cannot possibly be halted.

Under the circumstances, what position should the American Left adopt toward the problems of commercial agriculture? Should we back rigid price supports at 100 percent of parity because that is the demand of the more liberal elements in existing farmers' organizations? Should we try to find out what the small operator wants and then plug for that, on the theory that it is always the duty of the



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Left to be with the masses? Or should we tell the truth that under capitalism the small farmer has no future and that all the banks and plans and schemes which are supposed to insure his salvation simply serve the purpose of diverting attention from the reality of fat profits for big farmers and the rapid advance of concentration and centralization? For our part, we have no doubt what the answer should be *and sooner or later will have to be.*

This does not mean that we ought to adopt a lofty, hands-off, socialism-or-nothing attitude toward agriculture. We should also have a short-run program, *but it should be based on the realities and possibilities of the existing situation.*

For the agricultural wage earner, this means organization into unions and full protection of labor, social security, and welfare legislation.

For subsistence farmers, it means a serious social security and welfare program and, above all, accessible job opportunities at decent wages and under decent conditions.

The small commercial farmer undoubtedly presents the hardest problem of all. He needs help and he deserves help, and certainly the Left cannot afford to abandon him. But neither can the Left afford to deceive him with false remedies and demagogic promises. The first job is to bring to him an understanding of his position and of the possible alternatives before him. Generally speaking, these alternatives are, first, to get hold of the capital needed to grow into a big farmer. A few will manage to do this, but obviously no solution for the mass of small farmers can be sought along this line. The second alternative is to sell out and move to town or city. In many cases, this is obviously the part of wisdom, and it is much better that it should be accomplished before rather than after bankruptcies and forced sales. Moreover, government programs to assist small farmers in selling their land and equipment on favorable terms and moving to other jobs and/or localities are both possible and desirable.

Is there no third alternative? Certainly hanging on for a year or two more in the hope of a bigger government handout—which is what tens of thousands of small commercial farmers are now doing—cannot be described as a real alternative, not even if the handout is forthcoming. But there *is* one other possibility, which American farmers have so far left largely unexplored, the banding together of small farmers to form large, economically viable producers' cooperatives.

We do not pretend to know how much scope there is for a producers' cooperative movement under present conditions, but we do feel certain that in principle this is by far the best solution for the small farmer. Surely it should be the duty and responsibility of the



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American Left to study the problem with the utmost care and to come forth with a realistic program designed to foster the development of producers' cooperatives to the maximum possible extent. That way lies a decent livelihood and self-respect for the small farmer. That way also lies the excitement and pride of pioneering the forms of the socialized agriculture of the future.

(April 15, 1956)

---

*The practice of entrusting the land (and resources) of the nation to private persons in the hope that they will make the best of it has been discredited by the consistency with which they have made the worst of it.*

—Bernard Shaw

---

*Today, the forces of nature have been harnessed for mass production. For the first time ever, a society is possible in which poverty can be abolished, and with it, misery and hunger. The eradication of hunger is no Utopian scheme; it is a perfectly available objective. All it requires is a better adjustment of men to the lands they occupy, and a better distribution of the gifts of the land among men.*

—Josué de Castro, *The Geography of Hunger*

---

## NO COMMENT

Q. *So, might it be said that the greatest amount spent for research in any one disease is spent on cancer research?*

A. *No, it's considerably less than is spent on hoof-and-mouth disease of cattle and other agricultural problems. Livestock deaths represent a loss in dollars and cents, so they get heavily financed research programs.*

—From an interview with Dr. C. P. Rhoads, Director of the Sloan-Kettering Institute for Cancer Research, *U. S. News & World Report,* February 10, 1956

---

*Competition may be the life of commerce, but it is the ruin of the human mind.*

—W. B. Yeats



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# PROBLEMS OF AMERICAN SOCIALISM

We remind readers that we have on several occasions run discussions under this heading, the last being in the issue of July 1955. The time is clearly ripe for another discussion, to which no limits need be set in advance. Without consciously intending to do so, our own pieces in the March issue (Leo Huberman's open letter to Joan R— and Paul Sweezy's review of Starobin's book *From Paris to Peking*) have served to stimulate and focus reader comment, and we publish below a selection of communications received up to the end of March.

One or two matters of editorial policy need to be stated. Space limitations are such that discussion pieces must be kept relatively short. If what you send in is too long, we may either pass it over or cut it. It is better that you should do the cutting yourself. We will print names and identify authors where we have specific permission. Otherwise we will withhold names. But anonymous contributions will not normally be considered.

We shall intervene from time to time in the discussion where we think it might help to clarify the issues or where we have something positive to contribute. For the present, we want only to make a few brief comments on the letter from Art Sharon of the Socialist Workers Party which is the final communication printed below. The purpose is to remove possible misunderstanding about MR's basic position.

In his letter to Joan R—, Leo Huberman wrote: "The Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party advocates socialism, but in an unrealistic sectarian way with all its energies focused on attacking Stalinism." To this, Mr. Sharon replies: "Perhaps since the 20th Congress of the CPSU you are now re-evaluating that particular criticism. At any rate you must recognize that along with our rejection of 'Stalinism' goes its corollary defense of Leninism and the conquests of the Russian Revolution."

The implication of this obviously is that we would normally determine our attitude and position in the light of what happens in the Soviet Union. In respect to some things—particularly internal developments in the socialist countries—this is of course perfectly true. But we want to make it as clear as we possibly can that what we think about the United States—including each and every political



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

party or grouping in this country—is completely independent of what happens in the Soviet Union. The notion that *because* of the attack on Stalinism by the XX Congress of the CPSU (which in and of itself certainly has positive aspects), *therefore* we would re-evaluate our criticism of the SWP for focusing its energies on attacking Stalinism proves not only that the SWP doesn't understand us but also that the SWP itself still thinks in essentially "Russian" terms. At bottom, the weakness and sectarianism of the SWP has had precisely the same roots as the weakness and sectarianism of the Communist Party: both have been dominated by Soviet developments; neither has ever succeeded in working out American solutions for American problems.

This brings us to the second sentence quoted from Mr. Sharon's letter. The SWP, he appears to be saying, bases itself on Leninism and the conquests of the Russian Revolution. Is this the correct and appropriate position for the American Left to take? With regard to the conquests of the Russian Revolution, the answer is an unqualified affirmative. The Russian and Chinese Revolutions are to the twentieth century what the American and French Revolutions were to the eighteenth. They belong to all of progressive humanity, and any one who claims to be of the Left and still refuses to defend their historic achievements is either a fraud or a fool.

Is the same true of Leninism? In our view, the answer depends on what you understand by the term. Lenin was one of the greatest men who ever lived, and much of what he accomplished in the fields of thought and action has universal validity. But Lenin was also the master strategist of a revolution that took place under unique historical and geographical conditions, and some of his most fruitful ideas and discoveries were designed to cope with the problems of the Tsarist empire in the world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. How far they are applicable to other countries and times therefore depends to a very large extent on how closely conditions resemble those of pre-1917 Russia.

This is not the place to attempt to settle the question of how much of Leninism has relevance and validity for the United States at mid-century. But it is a good place to state that for our part we are certain that not *all* of it has, and that the kind of undiscriminating acceptance of Leninism as a whole and without qualification that has always characterized both the SWP and the CP can be, has been, and will continue to be a fatal political error.

One final point: one of the main purposes of the discussion which is now going on in left-wing circles, and of which this discussion in MR is only a small part, must be precisely to re-assess past relations and attitudes not only to Stalinism but also to Lenin-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ism. And among the points that cannot and should not be avoided are the nature of the Leninist party itself and the Leninist conception of the socialist international.—THE EDITORS

## IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

**By A. P.**

Dear Mr. Huberman:

While I am sure you hoped your article, "Socialists and Elections" (MR, March 1956), would stimulate readers, I wonder whether you meant to keep them up nights. But here it is five-thirty in the morning; I've taken two sleeping pills but can't sleep. For days now your letter to Joan R—, which I read only once, has provoked endless thoughts. To be frank I am not a constant reader of MR; I glance at it from time to time. I am a student (with a great deal of required reading I must do), a woman, and in my early twenties. I was born into the upper-middle classes, and in my short life I have never known depressions, unemployment, serious illness, hunger, cold, and other human afflictions too numerous to mention. During World War II, when I wasn't attending grammar school, I was cultivating friendships, rock gardens, and worrying about boys. Every summer I went to camp. Another most important factor: I was (and am) loved by my parents and respected by them. Later, I went to high school and college. The jobs I held from time to time were primarily for experience and amusement, not for money.

While at college, during the height of the witch hunt, I joined the CP. Why? In a few (vastly oversimplified) sentences, because the perverted human values of bourgeois capitalist society are not confined to the lower floors but penetrate even into the secure well-heated ivory towers of the leisure class. As a daughter, sister, student, youth, and woman, I perceived many of the cruel injustices of the life about me—if only through a soot-stained curtained window in Harlem as seen from the train whisking me back to quiet suburbia where we lived. But this is not the point of my letter and I'll continue.

In the Party I met and worked with all sorts—on the whole good, warm-hearted, generous, hard-working human beings—mostly young. The discussions were open and democratic. I rarely exercised the privilege of dissent because, while I often felt uneasy about the decisions and proposed actions, I really had nothing positive to sug-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gest in their place and attributed my lack of enthusiasm to the inbred apathy of my class, and my isolation from many of the actual struggles. (The only exception to the above lay in my inability to establish rapport with the majority of Negro comrades. I never felt liked or trusted by them. I felt that I was constantly being "tested," though this has never been my feeling with Negroes outside the Party.)

There was much discussion about the need to join "mass organizations" and I joined the ADA and was active in it long before the others ventured forth. I chose the ADA not only because it was suggested to me but because I wanted to. I knew that the background of the young people—on the whole middle-class, Jewish, college-educated, citified—approximated my own, and I felt that I would be more or less at home. In a word (two, rather) I wasn't. The organization engaged in many good works, but these were more than amply counterbalanced by a mass preoccupation with "fighting totalitarianism" of the Left, Right, Center, and God knows where else. The suspicions (justified) of Communist "infiltration" served to heighten their phobia of the "red menace" and "international Communist conspiracy."

Being, on the whole, a frank, open, straightforward sort, I was, to state it mildly, uneasy in their "liberal" midst. In fact, I felt like a spy, saboteur, and imposter, or, as the psychiatrists might say—unwanted. And, I will add, not only did they not want me, but the feeling came to be positively mutual. How could I work with, much less respect, people who would not lift a finger in behalf of my most elementary rights (as well as those of other Communists) and who spoke of me (I confess I took it all quite personally) as part of a "monstrous conspiracy," when I knew the so-called "conspirators" to be decent, peace-loving, downright likeable human beings with a way-above average quantity of courage and conscience. I stayed on, gravitating inexorably towards the postscript to your letter, i.e., that state wherein the difference between what I believed and what I was doing loomed daily larger. Marxists speak of the productive tensions which arise out of the disparity between man's being and man's consciousness. They should also mention the other by-products—grief and despair, mingled with strong doses of schizophrenia.

On to another point: Through the years, as a result of growth, study, and observation, I have come into possession of a small (but to me very precious) body of independent thought. It does not always harmonize with basic Party concepts. Sometimes it comes into violent conflict. I continue to regard the Soviet Union (for example) through sympathetic, even wondrous, eyes; yet there is much in its history, past and present, which I find deeply disturbing, and which I can,



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at times, only label as grotesque. Only today [March 7], the article in the *New York Times,* on the purge of Yiddish Soviet writers in 1948 (which I know from sources other than Harrison Salisbury to be true) has filled me with pain and remorse. Not only for the men (be they scholarly, creative, or counter-revolutionary—I don't care) who perished; not only for the eternal loss to Yiddish culture, but also because, in the face of strong evidence at the time, I refused to believe and furiously denied the possibility that such a thing could happen in the USSR. It is to the credit of the new regime that such excesses are being deplored, that the men responsible will be castigated, or have been already; and yet I know that, as a Party member, it is almost inevitable that I will again, as before, fall into such "errors" and will again, as before, repent of them when it is too late to resuscitate the dead.

I feel there is little enough I can do in this world. I am powerless to act before many evils and injustices here in the United States and elsewhere. But as a threadbare minimum, can I not try to keep my mind open in the hope that I may glimpse the truth, judge the event, and act wisely upon it? It is perhaps a small example of injustice I have cited (and perhaps, in all objectivity, I should talk also of the injustices in my own country), and yet it, like your article, has managed to keep me up all night filled with a terrible restlessness coupled with a strong desire to be, in the future, truer to myself—even knowing that "self" to be supremely fallible. I keep thinking of what a wonderful man, a Communist, once told me. It comes from the Bible: *If I am not for myself, who is for me? If not now, when?* How true, simple, and beautiful.

I do not ever wish the Soviet Union to become a God that failed. No government, not even a socialist one, can be God-like. Governments, being composed of men, are of necessity profoundly human—full of faults, weaknesses, evils—as well as glorious accomplishments and splendid dreams.

I simply want to change my place from that of a worshipper to that of a friend, with the prerogative of friends to be at times fiercely critical, at times loving.

I will continue to work in organizations for whose ideas and members (unlike the ADA) I feel affection and respect, and in front of whom I need not distort and disguise my views, and who will, in times of peace and in times of crisis, protect my right to work, eat, speak my mind, and act, even though they disagree profoundly with my political concepts.

It is morning and I must get ready for classes. I have written you out of a peculiarly strong desire to talk with someone, and because, though I do not know you, your correspondence with Joan



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

R— made me feel you would, at least, listen to my rambling, nocturnal thoughts. You are, of course, free to quote from any parts of this letter.

Accept, in closing, the sad by-now-cliché regret of the twentieth century progressive writer, that circumstances prevent me from signing other than my initials.

## A GREAT POTENTIAL AUDIENCE

**By A Subscriber**

Dear Mr. Sweezy:

Your article on Joseph Starobin's *From Paris to Peking* proved doubly interesting to me, since we had the good fortune of meeting Mr. Starobin personally recently when we arranged for two informal meetings here [in a Western town]. Let me say immediately that Mr. Starobin made a deep impression on his audiences as a fine, sincere, and thoughtful person. He definitely reflected the qualities apparent in his book and which you shrewdly reveal.

Moreover, in our conversations together, we discussed at quite some length the issues which you examine in your article. Your conclusions agreed in large part with the drift of our evaluations of the difficuties of not only Communist authors and publications, but of the problems of the "left" press in general. The necessity of a re-evaluation of the methods and approach of the Left to contemporary problems and to building a receptive audience for its programs and ideas has long been overdue.

I think it would be a mistake for the editors of *Monthly Review* to assume that this problem affected only the Communists. The *Monthly Review* at present probably is the most serious, intelligent, radical publication in America. Its content and style are generally excellent. Yet *Monthly Review* sometimes slips into the abuses which have stigmatized much Communist writing. In particular, I believe your magazine suffers from use of certain catch phrases and words, most often used to characterize those forces of which you disapprove, and from a readiness to indulge in oversimplification of the complex issues which you discuss. This latter criticism is doubtless a result of space limitations to some extent, but I think it strengthens the contention that the Left should always be on the lookout for the evils



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which you ably point out exist in much Communist literature. The Left has lost and is losing a great potential audience of intelligent, thoughtful readers who are dismayed and disgusted by political trends in this country, but who still are not going to accept propaganda, slogans, and slanted emotional appeals in place of an honest search for answers and solutions.

I hope that a re-evaluation will recur on many levels of leftist activities in the near future. More honest discussions and articles such as yours would be much appreciated and very valuable in facilitating this process. Certainly men of the stature of Joseph Starobin are to be encouraged, regardless of their position toward any single group. Given that encouragement (including buying their books), they can be counted on for a significant contribution to the continuing struggle.

Finally, a word of praise for your continuing fine work in producing *Monthly Review*. The honesty and courageousness of the magazine have carved out for it a unique place in the history of one of America's most repressive periods. I don't need to add that I *hope* you keep up the good work; I *know* that you will, and each succeeding issue confirms that knowledge.

## OUR FIRST JOB?

**By M.**

Dear Leo:

I hate to put you in the position of a sob-sister for the politically puzzled, but your answers to Joan made me feel you might have some more for me.

Frankly, I agree with you that it is nonsense for socialists to work within capitalist parties. You say that to vote you are going to have to choose between the four existing socialist parties, although you have reservations about each. Obviously a lot of other people feel the same way. Some even want to form a fifth socialist party which they hope somehow will let them vote without any reservations. Rather than multiply the divisions, I can't help but wonder if the time hasn't come to reduce them?

Would it be possible, now, for Marxists of good faith (meaning your "convinced socialists" who want to change the social structure and who do not fight socialism where it ready exists) to be creative—even daring—and form a common socialist-communist party? I realize



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that will require a tremendous amount of give and take and willingness to work out an agreement on program and methods of work. But isn't it worth it? The left forces in America at the moment are so small they really have nothing to lose but their individual isolation.

Isn't the moment the most favorable possible for change? The only socialist societies to date were established by Communist Parties. But even they are now saying that there is no single path to socialism and that social revolution can be achieved in many ways (including by peaceful parliamentary victories). The obvious implication is that each Communist Party must seek the way to socialism appropriate to the conditions in its country. At this point, then, the American Communists should be seeking. The left-wing socialists have admittedly been seeking for some time. Could they join their seeking and produce some radical change on the Left such as a new American Marxist party? Not easy, I admit, but maybe crucial.

And wouldn't such a party eventually help solve some of the nubby problems of voting come election day? Certainly it would run its own candidates. Conceivably, it would also enter into local election agreements when necessary and where possible with liberal candidates whom labor supports. One could then, perhaps, work *as a socialist* for a liberal candidate of a non-socialist party, which is quite different from working within a capitalist party.

I don't think you can build socialism without a really effective Marxist party (a case in point, perhaps, is the British Labor Party and the deceptions of "socialist" Britain). For that matter, you can't fight very well on any front (civil liberties, segregation, foreign policy, and the etceteras) when your troops are divided and confused. Maybe our first job is to organize that party.

## WE NEED A PARTY

**By Ralph Clifford**

Dear Mr. Huberman:

We, the "convinced socialists," need a party. In your exchange of letters in the last issue, I thought your reasoning led to that conclusion, and I was disappointed that you didn't follow through. I can certainly appreciate Joan R—'s dilemma, and I agree with your analysis in general. But I don't understand why you did not, or do not, suggest the formation of a new party. A really socialist party of the type you so clearly described as being needed. Not another Progressive Party to be sure, nor a socialist party with the main ob-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

jective of competing for votes, as you say. But a party which would help us accomplish the job of education for socialism, which you state to be our main task at this time.

Most people, or most Americans, I don't know which, think in terms of "parties." All political thinking and discussion takes place along party lines. It makes it much more difficult to discuss the subject of socialism without a party and its official position as an introduction. The student you mentioned in your letter is indeed rare. As we all know it is even difficult to mention the subject of socialism to someone completely unfamiliar with it. But when the rare occasion does come along, we are further impeded by lack of an even slightly known official position, as represented by a party. When I have mentioned the subject of socialism to people unfamiliar with it, I have often, or always, been confronted with the questions: "Well what are you: a Communist, or a Norman Thomas Socialist Party member? If not either, then what are you?" And I must answer that I am a *Monthly Review-American Socialist* socialist. I try to get the potential listener to read the magazine, and point out that the position is clearly defined in *Monthly Review's* statement. But he is no longer interested. He has heard nothing of this position, his knowledge of politics is confined to Republican or Democrat, and the only alternative to that is the Communists, which of course because of the propaganda and witch hunt no longer appear to him as a political party but a group of spies. To him, I am just a "reader of a magazine" who sometimes thinks about something called socialism which is neither Communist nor Norman Thomas. Now I don't say that he is a potential convert to socialism, at least not at the present time, and I have lost him without a party. But he will not learn about socialism, indeed even hear about it, unless it is officially represented by a political party and receives notice as such in the communications media he listens to.

I am sure you are aware of this, along with some of the other advantages to be gained by having a party. It could be a needed clearing house for information and publications. It would provide the organization necessary for the discussion of issues and ideas among the convinced socialists of the country. I think we need meetings, local and national ones, of socialists. I think we must have meetings of socialists so that we might further our understanding of the problems and plans of socialism in the country. I don't think that the general type meetings or forums of the type that *Monthly Review* has sponsored, although invaluable, fit this specific need. I also think that there is a definite need to gather all the loose socialists in the country together. They have been split, isolated, bewildered, and lonely too long. The longer this is postponed, the more socialists



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will be lost.

The position of the *Monthly Review*-type socialist goes completely unnoticed, of course, in the press, because we have no position. I am not naive enough to think that we would get much notice even if we had an official party, or that it could possibly be favorable. But we would get some, so that the word socialism would not be such an alien word, and a so-completely unknown and misunderstood position. Isn't this an important and a very necessary part of the education you speak of, considering the overwhelming inundating power of the American propaganda machine?

I think this is the perfect time for the formation of a new party, of a new type. The need for political realignment has never been so great in recent years. The Democratic Party is split wide open over the segregation issue. The Southern bloc has opened a breach so wide that even slippery Stevenson will have a difficult time mending it. The Republicans appear united behind Eisenhower, but the Knowland wing of ultra-reactionaries is seething beneath its smile. The labor misleaders deny any thoughts of a labor party, or even the right of labor to mix in politics, but it's in the air or they wouldn't be so self-conscious about it without apparent cause. But we should not wait for them to move, just hoping they will form a labor party. The need for a true socialist party is apparent. If formed, we might even help a labor party come into existence—and then join it or prod it from the outside, depending on the conditions. Also the new Soviet position on the excesses of Stalin and dogmatism should enable us to rally quite a few socialists who are tired of being split and splintered, who, isolated and inactive for years, would welcome the opportunity to get back into the socialist movement.

I don't think the value of such a party or our ability to form one should be underestimated. Neither do I think any illusions about vote-getting should be encouraged. I was not at the Debs meeting, but everything I have read and heard about it indicates that it was a success. The names of the people and the publications that participated in it were indeed impressive. It was encouraging to see many different types of socialists were represented. The publications that were involved in that meeting would form an excellent press for a new socialist party.

The time is ripe; our publications good; we need discussion of socialism and meetings to accomplish this; the scattered, bewildered, isolated socialists throughout the country should and need to be brought together; it would help us to spread the word and further understanding, and it would make our job of education for socialism much easier. What can we lose? Let's start a new socialist party of a new type.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

## WE ASK YOUR SUPPORT

**By Art Sharon, Socialist Workers Party**

Dear Mr. Huberman:

We note with interest your statement in the March issue of *Monthly Review* stating your intention of supporting a socialist ticket in the coming national elections.

You say your choice of socialist tickets will be made from among the four socialist parties: the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, the Socialist Labor Party, or the Socialist Workers Party.

On the basis of your criteria, the Communist Party obviously cannot be supported. Its policy is one of supporting Democrats and *in line with that it will not enter a national ticket in this coming* electoral contest.

The Socialist Party has a similar electoral position; consequently no slate of the Socialist Party will appear on the ballot. This is further attested to by the failure of the Socialist Party to enter presidential candidates in the recent important Pennsylvania nominations.

This leaves only the Socialist Labor Party and ourselves. We submit that your position on the Russian Revolution and the Soviet Union rules out the SLP on principle.

You criticize the Socialist Workers Party as advocating socialism "in an unrealistic sectarian way." We don't think we do, but we would be happy to explore better methods of "advocating socialism." We would be happy to discuss with you any specific expression of our alleged sectarianism. Further you criticize the SWP for "focusing its energies on attacking Stalinism." Perhaps since the 20th Congress of the CPSU you are now re-evaluating that particular criticism. At any rate you must recognize that along with our rejection of "Stalinism" goes its corollary defense of Leninism and the conquests of the Russian Revolution.

There is a vast accumulation of misunderstanding, distortion, and slander that make up the body of attacks on the SWP. This in large measure deters many "left elements" from supporting the SWP electorally. We are interested in separating honest differences from fanciful nonsense, and to that end welcome every opportunity to do so.

In short we are asking for your support in the 1956 elections. We would like further, to present our case for electoral support to the SWP in your publication. A good beginning would be the publication of this letter.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# WHERE WE STAND

## BY THE EDITORS

During the early years of the 20th century the subject of socialism was widely and eagerly discussed in the United States. Eugene V. Debs, socialist candidate for president, polled close to 1,000,000 votes in 1912—the equivalent of approximately 3,000,000 votes in the 1948 election. The popular interest in socialism was reflected in an enormous sale of socialist literature. *The Appeal to Reason,* a weekly, had a circulation of more than 300,000 for several years; pamphlets by Oscar Ameringer were printed in editions of hundreds of thousands; books by Bellamy, Upton Sinclair, and Jack London ranked with the best-sellers of the day.

This widespread interest in socialism has declined to such an extent that today it would probably not be an exaggeration to say that for the great majority of Americans "socialism" is little more than a dirty word. This is an extraordinary situation because it occurs at the very moment that a large proportion of the rest of the world is moving toward socialism at an unprecedentedly rapid rate. It is a deeply disturbing situation because there are still many Americans who believe with us that, in the long run, socialism will prove to be the only solution to the increasingly serious economic and social problems that face the United States.

It is because we hold firmly to this belief that we are founding *Monthly Review,* an independent magazine devoted to analyzing, from a socialist point of view, the most significant trends in domestic and foreign affairs.

By "socialism" we mean a system of society with two fundamental characteristics: first, public ownership of the decisive sectors of the economy, and, second, comprehensive planning of production for the benefit of the producers themselves.

The possibility and workability of such a system of society are no longer open to doubt. Socialism became a reality with the

---

*Reprinted from Vol.* I, *No.* 1 (*May,* 1949) *and the first issue of every subsequent year.*



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

introduction of the first Five Year Plan in Soviet Russia in 1928; its power to survive was demonstrated by the subsequent economic achievements of the USSR during the '30s, and finally, once and for all, in the war against Nazi Germany. These facts—and they are facts which no amount of wishful thinking can conjure away—give to the USSR a unique importance in the development of socialism and in the history of our time.

We find completely unrealistic the view of those who call themselves socialists, yet imagine that socialism can be built on an international scale by fighting it where it already exists. This is the road to war, not to socialism. On the other hand, we do not accept the view that the USSR is above criticism simply because it is socialist. We believe in, and shall be guided by, the principle that the cause of socialism has everything to gain and nothing to lose from a full and frank discussion of shortcomings, as well as accomplishments, of socialist countries and socialist parties everywhere.

We shall follow the development of socialism all over the world, but we want to emphasize that our major concern is less with socialism abroad than with socialism at home. We are convinced that the sooner the United States is transformed from a capitalist to a socialist society, the better it will be, not only for Americans, but for all mankind.

We believe that there are already many Americans who share this attitude with us and that their number will steadily increase. We ask their financial support, their assistance in extending our circulation, and their advice as to how *Monthly Review* can best serve the cause of socialism in the United States.

*Clarity about the aims and problems of socialism is of greatest significance in our age of transition. Since, under present circumstances, free and unhindered discussion of these problems has come under a powerful taboo, I consider the founding of this magazine to be an important public service.*

PROFESSOR ALBERT EINSTEIN
in his article "Why Socialism?" in Vol. I, No. 1



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# WORLD EVENTS

*By Scott Nearing*

## Cherchez l'Huile!

Millions of words have been written and spoken, during recent months, about the Near East, Middle East, and North Africa as hot spots in the cold war. Governments have changed hands in Iran and Egypt. Jordan's Chief of State has dismissed the British General who headed the Jordan Army; North Africa has seethed with revolt; war supplies have been shipped into the area, and bullets have whined back and forth across the tangle of frontiers which separate the cluster of states scattered across Western Asia, Northern Africa, and Eastern Europe.

More recently a bitter struggle has raged between the tiny population (mostly of Greek origin), which lives on the Island of Cyprus and the vastly superior forces of the British Government. The Cypriotes, for whom two high churchmen have been the spokesmen, demand independence. The British insist on military occupation of the island. British representatives, led by the armed forces, have staged a shameless reign of terror culminating, on March 9th, in the arrest and deportation of the two bishops who had been speaking up for the people of Cyprus.

Washington has become increasingly entangled in the power politics of this area. A decade ago, the United States accepted from the British responsibility for policing the Eastern Mediterranean. Since that time United States naval vessels have patrolled the Mediterranean, United States bases have been established in Southern Europe, North Africa, Greece, Arabia, and Turkey, and the Washington government has pushed, insistently, for a military alliance that would be responsible for the security of Western interests in the Near and Middle East. For a time Egypt was regarded as the logical leader of such an organization. Later efforts sought to link Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey in a Balkan Pact. More recently the Baghdad Pact, sponsored by London and supported by Washington, has united Near and Middle East in a loose coalition.

Innocent observers are perplexed and bewildered by this sudden concentration of world interest and activity in the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Asia. "Why all the hubbub?" they ask. "What is the reason for the shouting and shooting?"



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

President Truman, in March 1947, gave a political answer. *First,* he told Congress, Greece and Turkey desperately needed economic aid. *Second,* Greece was in the midst of a civil war waged between the London-Washington-backed monarchy and a left coalition in which Communists were playing a leading part. *Third,* there was the possibility that Communism might take over the entire area of Southeast Europe and Western Asia. Since the United Nations was unable, said Truman, to act quickly and effectively, the United States should proceed, with the allies it could muster, to encircle and contain Communism, and exclude it from the whole Eastern Mediterranean region.

Eastern Mediterranean affairs have been turbulent during the whole period of written history because the Asian-African-European land mass was joined at this point, making it the crossroads of trade, travel, migration, and conquest. Three potent factors have combined to lift the area to its present day level of world importance.

The *first* of these factors was the rapidly growing demand for oil as fuel and lubricant, the exhaustion of older oil fields in the Americas, and the discovery that perhaps two-thirds of the world oil reserves lay east of the Mediterranean, south of Baku, west of Persia, and north of the rich oil fields of Arabia. The presence of extensive oil reserves gave this area a new importance. For centuries it had been a trading center. Now, in addition to its trade advantages, it had become a source of one of the crucial raw materials.

*Second.* The drive of anti-imperialism, nationalism, and self-determination has been in evidence for many years in Western Asia, Northern Africa, and Eastern Europe. Long before the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Great Powers were warring with each other for control of the area or joining hands to smother unrest. The heat generated by the 1939-1945 war intensified the drive of the local populations to self-determination.

*Finally,* the growth of collectivism in Eastern Europe and Asia further disturbed the status quo at the crossroads of Europe-Africa-Asia.

Thoroughly conversant with this entire situation as a result of long years in the British Foreign Office, and harried by the British compulsory withdrawal from Suez and the threat to Britain's position in Cyprus, Prime Minister Eden, in a statement to the House of Commons on March 14, 1956, blurted out the truth. "Our duty," he said, "is to safeguard the strategic needs of our country and of our ally. . . . Above all, oil. . . . The welfare and indeed the lives of our people depends on Cyprus as a protective guard and stage post to take care of those interests of oil. This is not imperialism. It should be the plain duty of any Government and we intend to



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

discharge it." A week earlier, on March 8, the London *Daily Telegraph* was equally specific: "The prime aim of policy in the Middle East is to secure our oil supplies."

Frenchmen have a saying: "If you wish to get at the bottom of complex personal relations, look for the woman in the case"—*cherchez la femme.* He who would find his way through the mazes and jungles of present-day power politics might well coin a parallel slogan: Look for the oil—*cherchez l'huile.*

### Oil and Power Politics

Oil has played a title role in the world power-politics drama during two generations. The oil role has grown in importance with the coming of the gas engine, high speed automative machinery, and especially the airplane. At the moment, the struggle for oil centers at the Near East crossroads because of the presence in that area of the planet's most extensive undeveloped oil reserves. Anyone concerned to understand economic and political cross-currents can hardly go wrong if he begins his research with a study of oil.

Harvey O'Connor (who has devoted a good share of his life to the subject) and *Monthly Review* (as publisher of his *Empire of Oil*) have brought together the principal facts regarding the role of oil in the present-day world. Chapters on "The Struggle for the World's Oil," "The Wealth of Arabia," "Politics of Oil in the Middle East," and "The Threat from Iran" give the reader a factual picture of the part played by the oil interests in shaping the course of events in the Middle East.

If you want to know what is happening in the Near and Middle East cock-pit of power politics; if you wish to follow events surrounding the controversy over tide-water oil lands and over the crooked course of the Natural Gas Bill through the United States Senate; if you desire to judge the basic factors in the present political campaign in the United States; get your hands on a copy of *The Empire of Oil* (published by Monthly Review Press in December 1955) and, under the guidance of its deservedly famous author, Harvey O'Connor, *"cherchez l'huile."*

### Troublesome but Teachable

One reader of *Monthly Review* writes: "I am 84 and should know enough about the world today. Many centuries of teaching human kind have made men aggressive, possessive, and eager to beat the other fellow to it. The task of reforming the world is terrific."

Another correspondent goes one better, as he is 85, and writes



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of *USA Today*: "What is said there is absolutely in line with what I think and have said for years. I have seen a long time ago that the United States is going back instead of ahead." He adds, "I am just an unlearned man and now 85 years old. But, oh God, I would like to live long enough to see a little more humanity practiced."

Human beings often stir up trouble. Occasionally they are fearfully destructive. But with rare exceptions, all of them are teachable. At times, in their music, their poetry, their gentleness, their generosity, and their confidence in a better future, they are grand to the point of magnificence.

## Sport for All

We have noted in previous *World Events* columns that the attitude of the Soviet Union in making sport a prominent feature of Soviet life is in large part responsible for the excellent showing made by Soviet athletes in international competitions. *Socialist Commentary* for March 1956 (447 Strand, London, W.C.2, England) carries an article on this matter by Elaine Burton, who has been a lifelong sports fan.

"In the autumn of 1954," the author states, "I was fortunate enough to be included in the Parliamentary delegation visiting the Soviet Union. One of the 'musts' on my list was to find out how the Russians discovered and trained their athletes. . . . In every Russian town there is a Town Soviet corresponding to our city or council, and each Soviet has a district sporting school. In the large towns there are several. Moscow, for instance, has twenty-five. School children can ask to attend these schools for their favorite sport, and maybe the best ten or twenty are selected. They go two or three times a week but they must have no bad marks at their ordinary lessons. The penalty for bad marks is non-attendance at the sporting school."

Here is an admirable formula for arousing and maintaining student interest. Young folks are taught that it is an honor to be a successful athlete. Any student who is interested may apply for regular athletic training but only those who are up to grade in their school work are permitted to attend the sports classes.

Elaine Burton notes that 13 to 15 year-old children attending the sports schools take part in regular district competitions; from 15 to 17 they engage in city-wide competitions; at 18 or 19 they participate in region-wide or republic-wide sports meets. Sixteen republics compose the Soviet Union. Once every two years there is a competitive sports meet in which representatives from the sports schools of all republics take part.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Side by side with this sports program for schools is the sports program for trade unions, which spend a fifth of their total income on sporting activities. The unions have their own gymnasiums, sport fields and stadiums, and engage in local, district, regional, republic, and All-Union sports events.

Sports in the schools and sports in the trade unions engage the interest and preoccupy the spare time of tens of millions of Soviet citizens, young and old. Instead of lounging in front of television screens and loafing around soda stands and bars, these millions of growing and mature people are on the playing fields, in the open air, working off fatty tissue and perfecting their skills in favorite sports. What a boon to health and vitality! What a pattern for discovering and developing sporting talent!

### And Now to Business

Soviet citizens, by millions, take part in sports. But sports are a minor episode in Soviet life. Building a socialist republic and sharing the task of organizing a socialist world are their major objectives. Professor John Turkevich of Princeton University, an authority on science in the Soviet Union, points out that "while Russia's present place in the world is determined by the number of its troops, the size of its nuclear stock-pile and the might of its industry, the nation's future position depends on its science and technology." (*Saturday Review,* March 24, 1956, p. 61.)

In a noteworthy article on "The Soviet's Scientific Elite" (from which the above quotation is taken), Mr. Turkevich remarks that except for top Government officials, Soviet scientists enjoy "the highest standard of living and the greatest esteem that Soviet society has to offer," consequently, "young people want to be scientists in Russia." Professor Turkevich then describes the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, which, through its 100 component institutions, employs 100,000 scientists at the university level. He also gives the program for developing the scientific and technological potential of the Soviet population.

Soviet youngsters at age seven enter a ten-year school in which 55 percent of the pupil's time is spent on general education, 11 percent on physical education, drawing, and singing. The other one-third of pupil time is devoted to mathematics, general science, chemistry, and physics. In the last three years of the ten-year school, 41 percent of all instruction deals with mathematics and science. This is required work for all pupils in the ten-year school.

Eleanor S. Lowman, specialist on Soviet education in the United States Office of Education, is quoted as reporting that each of the



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

million Soviet students graduating from secondary schools last June had taken five years of physics, one year of astronomy, four years of chemistry, five of biology, ten of mathematics, including algebra, geometry, and trigonometry, whereas "less than a third of approximately the same number of American high school graduates had taken as much as a year in chemistry." (*Saturday Review,* p. 63.)

Four years ago, in 1952, the Soviet Union and the United States each graduated about 30,000 engineers. In 1955, the United States graduated 23,000 while the Soviet Union graduated 63,000. Anyone who wishes to verify and amplify these figures can get a book on *Soviet Professional Manpower* published by the National Science Foundation. (Send $1.25 to the Superintendent of Documents, Washington 25, D.C.)

There is nothing particularly new about this trend. It has been referred to frequently in the public press during the past three years. It is a novelty, however, to have a supporter of private enterprise like the *Saturday Review* printing articles like those which appeared in its March 24 issue, and to be able to refer, for supporting evidence, to the United States Office of Education and to the Government Printing Office, both, since January 1953, under the direction of the Latter Day Prophet of Private Enterprise—Dwight D. Eisenhower.

## Power and Its Consequences

Power and its social consequences have played hob with the lives of multitudes through the entire period of recorded history. Since November 1917, the people of the Soviet Union and their leaders have confronted problems associated with gaining, exercising, retaining, and transferring power. Soviet experience reaffirms the verdict of history: Power problems are bitter medicine.

If we may base conclusions on the speeches and actions of Soviet leaders since the transfer of authority from Stalin to his successors, three years ago, it would seem that they have reached several conclusions. (1) That the general welfare must have priority over that of sub-groups or individuals. (2) That checks and balances are needed to prevent concentrated power from breeding tyranny and tyrants. (3) That the decentralization of authority is as important to the general welfare as its concentration. (4) That leaders should be selected, or at least approved, by the group they lead, or by its representatives. (5) That a community which aims at stability must devise some semi-automatic means of passing authority from one group to its successor. These five axioms of political science, put into practice, will go far toward insuring the success of any people's government.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

# I. F. STONE

reports from

## ISRAEL AND THE SOVIET UNION

Those of you who enjoyed Mr. Stone's stories in PM on Israel will want to read him now in his own WEEKLY.

Starting with the April 23, 1956 issue he will cable his reports from abroad.

In about two months he will again cover the news from his headquarters in Washington.

**REMEMBER:**

I. F. STONE'S WEEKLY is now in its fourth year of successful publication. This 4-page letter carries news and documentary material not available elsewhere. It has made a reputation for thoughtful, independent analysis and reporting, and for undeviating adherence to 100 percent civil libertarian principles.

**SUBSCRIBE NOW AND ASK THAT YOUR SUB START WITH THE ISSUE OF APRIL 23, 1956**

## I. F. STONE'S WEEKLY

I. F. Stone's Weekly, 301 E. Capitol Street, S.E., Washington 3, D.C.

For the enclosed $5, please send a year's sub to:

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... Zone ..... State .....

Enter gift sub for $2 (6 mo.) or $4 (1 yr.) additional:

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... Zone ..... State .....

Shall we send gift announcement? ☐ Yes No ☐

For Canada and Mexico, add $1; for England and Europe, $10 by first class mail, $15 air mail; for Israel, Asia and Australia, $10 by first class mail and $20 for air mail.




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(*continued from inside front cover*)

but after talking it over at length we decided that it would be wiser to wait. For one thing, we wanted time to read and digest the texts of the XX Congress of the Soviet Communist Party; but even more important, we felt that it would be half-baked to rush into print on so important a subject without time for the most thorough discussion and analysis. It was at just this point that all the problems involved in appealing the Sweezy case to the United States Supreme Court hit us. That settled the question, by *force majeure* as it were. Let us assure you that we are going to have our say on the latest Soviet developments, and we hope it will be worth waiting for. Of one thing we feel sure anyway: the subject will not lose its interest or topicality for a long, long time to come.

Speaking of the Sweezy case, we are delighted to be able to tell you that Professor Thomas I. Emerson, of the Yale Law School, one of the country's leading authorities on constitutional civil liberties, has agreed to take the appeal to the Supreme Court. It is his hope, as well as ours, that the case may lead to a clarification and strengthening of the constitutional status of academic freedom. However, the recent Supreme Court decision in the Steve Nelson case may mean that the academic freedom question raised by Sweezy may never reach the highest court but will be disposed of in a re-hearing before the New Hampshire Supreme Court. The legal situation, in the light of the Nelson decision, is extremely obscure as we go to press.

A mistake on the front cover—that's the nightmare that haunts every publisher of a magazine. It became a reality for us with our last issue which came out with an April 1955 dateline instead of April 1956. We apologize. Please change the 5 to a 6 on your own copy.

You, too, can make mistakes, and one that many readers make every summer costs us time and money. It's the far too common mistake of not notifying us of your change of address when you go on vacation. If you go away for a few weeks or even for a month or two, you don't need to notify us *provided that you make arrangements for some one at your address to receive and hold your copy of MR pending your return.* That is what we would like you to do. What we don't like is to have to pay postage for magazines that come back because you've left home without making such arrangements. If you go away for longer than two months, please let us know—in plenty of time to make the change.


# 7th ANNIVERSARY PARTY

**celebrating the founding of Monthly Review**

Wednesday, May 16, at 8:30 P.M. sharp

at Fraternal Clubhouse, 110 W. 48th St. (near 6th Ave.)

Speakers:

**LEO HUBERMAN:** Two Nations—White and Black

**PAUL SWEEZY:** Cross-Country Tour—A Report

**REV. STEPHEN H. FRITCHMAN:**
Is It Utopian to Advocate American Socialism?

Chairman: HENRY PRATT FAIRCHILD *Refreshments*

**Admission: In advance $1 . . . At the door, $1.25 . . . Associates Free**

Write for tickets for yourself and friends to

Monthly Review Associates, 66 Barrow Street, New York 14, N. Y.




LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

**Bertrand Russell Accuses the F.B.I.**
**Of Atrocities, Doubts Rosenbergs' Guilt**

—Headline in the *New York Times*, March 27, 1956

Many people throughout the world also doubt the Rosenbergs' guilt. On June 19, 1956, the third anniversary of their execution, Monthly Review Press will publish a book on the case by Professor Malcolm P. Sharp, of the University of Chicago. Professor Sharp describes the issues, weighs the evidence, pinpoints the weaknesses in the prosecution's case and gives his own reasons for believing that the execution of the Rosenbergs was a gross miscarriage of justice. In an admirable Introduction, Professor Harold C. Urey, world-famous atomic scientist and winner of the Nobel Prize, summarizes the evidence and helps to establish the truth about this tragic affair.

# WAS JUSTICE DONE?

## The Rosenberg-Sobell Case

by

**MALCOLM P. SHARP**

Professor of Law, University of Chicago

with an Introduction by

**HAROLD C. UREY**

Professor, Enrico Fermi Institute for Nuclear Studies
University of Chicago

Price on publication—$3.50 per copy
Pre-publication price—$2.50 (you save $1.00)
Combination price with MR—$5.00 (you save $1.50)

**Save money by ordering now. Send your order, with payment enclosed, to**

MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS, 66 Barrow Street, New York 14, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED